

THE CLEVELAND  
MUSEUM OF ART  
11150 EAST  
BOULEVARD  
CLEVELAND, OHIO  
216-1797



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Contact: Greg Donley

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART PRESENTS *RICHARD LONG PHOTOGRAPHS:  
ART OF WALKING*

October 9 - December 6, 1992, Photography Gallery 105

An exhibition of photography and text by British artist Richard Long opens at The Cleveland Museum of Art on October 9, in recognition of The Cleveland Society for Contemporary Art's new gift of Long's 1991 slate sculpture *Cornwall Circle*, (on view October 27 in the exhibition, *Signs of Affection: Gifts Honoring the Museum's 75th Anniversary*). Long's work, though it has been in the forefront of contemporary art for the past 20 years, actually grows out of age-old British traditions: walking, journeying, and climbing. His sculptures incorporate such things as stone, slate, wood, or mud, arranged in simple geometric compositions that invite the viewer to reconcile the imposed order with inherent natural qualities of the materials. His photographic projects use similar materials and arrangements but engage the imagination differently, by presenting carefully constructed scenarios of implied human interaction with the environment. Though this show consists primarily of photographs, Long's art also operates in a realm beyond the pure beauty of the prints—he uses photography in its “documentary mode” to create what might be thought of as minimalist photo-travelogues of images that evoke strong but mysterious links between land and human.

These “travelogues” take the form of annotated maps as well as photo-and-text documents of walking and cycling journeys—the camera records, not striking vistas or famous landmarks, but Long's strange, poetic manipulations of chosen sites with materials found nearby. He is especially fond of stones: “I like the idea that stones are what the world is made of.” In all of these works lives an intimate, profound reverence for the earth. Still, his art is not in the least didactic. Sometimes the images seem to say nothing more than that man has been here and neatly rearranged a few things for no obvious reason. Long's work engages the viewer's energy by inspiring the simple question, “Why would somebody do this?” The viewer who asks this question is already vicariously part of the scenario and becomes a participant in Long's art—though the simple question “why?” may never be answered in any logical way. Each work, offering a “document” of one of Long's contemplative journeys, invites the viewer to share the artist's intuitive sense of wonder at his significant yet ephemeral place in nature.

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Red-Blue Slate Circle from 1985 is a work incorporating forty-four colorful stones that Long gathered from an upstate New York quarry that he frequents. The irregularly shaped, flat stones, arranged in a circle approximately eight feet in diameter, give a sense of motion and tension, caused by their confinement within the overall form.

Watermarks, composed of two photographs, records some of Long's activities on a trip through Mexico's Sierra Madre Mountains in 1979. In one work, Long poured water onto a dry riverbed, creating five dark shapes resembling animal or human figures. In the other, he threw stones across a river, splashing the opposite riverbank to make an abstract composition. In A Lappland Walk, Long documents through five photographs a trip he made in Finland in 1983. The exterior panels show subtle arrangements of stones made during the journey, while the other images record temporary shapes he made by lying down.

Insights into Long's works, which have been exhibited in galleries and museums around the world, are provided in a free guide to the exhibition prepared by Tom E. Hinson, the Museum's curator of contemporary art, who organized the exhibition. According to Hinson, "Long's solitary, precise, and thoughtful style has expanded the boundaries of sculpture through his choice of materials, sites, and approaches. And through his sharp ability to select, order, and depict, he isolates for the viewer the special visual and spiritual qualities to be found in nature."

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For additional information or photographs, contact the Public Information Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Blvd., Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 421-7340.